

the wealthy would oftener see that they were not wanting for substantial support.

I would not delay the starting of a small garden because I was not ready to maintain a large one. The delay may be long and the garden never appear. As in most kinds of business, there are some good reasons why a botanic garden should start as a small garden. The director must learn some things by experience; no matter how well he may be equipped, the subject will grow as he gives it more thought and as he carries his ideas into execution. To maintain a botanic garden of 1500 hardy plants, excluding most trees and not including the first outlay of the land, will cost not far from fifteen hundred dollars a year in a country place where living is not expensive. In cities it might be two or three times as much. One acre of land would answer very well for 500 kinds of plants, allowing room for paths and small ponds and bogs.—W. J. BEAL, *Agricultural College, Mich.*

THE ACAULESCENT VIOLETS.

To the Editor of the Botanical Gazette.—In the last issue of *Pittonia* I observe that Professor Greene discusses the same group of acaulescent violets of which I published, last spring, the sketch of a proposed revision.¹ I have read with much interest the argument by which he proceeds a step farther in the segregation process, separating *V. cucullata* Ait. from *V. obliqua* Hill. The feature of short-peduncled cleistogamous flowers with hypogaeous fruit, assigned by Professor Greene to *obliqua* in contradistinction to the erect, elongated fruiting peduncles of *cucullata*, may prove a character of some value in separating the species; but from a fairly thorough field knowledge of nearly every phase presented by *obliqua*, I am not prepared to admit that at the proper season specimens cannot be found exhibiting cleistogamous flowers and capsules with peduncles of every possible length, and these all on the same plant. As to the habitat, I think it will be found that the form with leaves of a dark green hue often occurs in open meadows instead of in "somewhat dense, moist thickets," and pale colored specimens are not rare in the shade. In view of the great confusion that has existed among this group of the violets, however, I am quite open to conviction upon this point; and I certainly agree with Professor Greene in the idea that the æstival and autumnal stages of our violets are too much neglected by collectors. Floral characters in this genus are of little value, and we must look to capsule and seeds for permanent specific distinctions.

With respect to the name, *obliqua*, I may say that I was fully aware of the inaccuracies of Hill's plate, against which Professor Greene inveighs so strongly; but I could neither then, nor can I now find any other American

¹ Proc. Biol. Soc. Wash. 10: 85-92. 1896.

violet to which it is in the remotest degree applicable if not to the well known plant under discussion, bearing in mind, of course, the fact that Hill's characterization of "floribus coeruleis" excludes from consideration *V. blanda*, with which Pursh, and *V. rotundifolia*, with which Gray confused it.—CHARLES LOUIS POLLARD, *Washington, D. C.*

THE TROPICAL LABORATORY COMMISSION.

To the Editors of the Botanical Gazette:—In accordance with your suggestion in the December number of the GAZETTE, I have undertaken the organization of a commission for the selection of a site for an international botanical laboratory in the American tropics. Such universal and substantial interest has been manifested in the matter that the belief is justified that the proposed laboratory is an assured fact and that the cooperation of a majority of the active botanical centers may be depended upon. A consideration of the nature and amount of the work to be done, as well as the conditions of traveling, leads to the conclusion that a commission of not less than three or more than five members would prove the most efficient. It will doubtless be possible to announce the entire personnel in your next issue.

As soon as possible after the organization is completed, a meeting of the American members to perfect plans for the season's work, will be held at some convenient point.

Previously to the organization of the commission, I had been in correspondence with the local botanists and representatives of the governments of the various countries to be visited, and am in receipt of many assurances that a grant of land and other concessions may be obtained without cost in almost any of the places in which the laboratory is likely to be located. This will allow the commission to select a site entirely on its merits as a center for botanical research, and its accessibility.

Any suggestions as to localities to be visited, sent to the undersigned, will be of assistance to the commission in planning the route to be covered.—D. T. MACDOUGAL, *The State University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minn.*